

OPINION

A debt of gratitude

By the end of next week the Southport-Oak Island area will have lost the official services of three dedicated and tenured public servants who have immeasurably helped shaped the destiny of our section of Brunswick County.

Life in Southport-Oak Island is better today because Norman Holden, May Moore and Jack Cook have been mayors of Southport, Yaupon Beach and Caswell Beach, respectively. Perhaps the strongest testimony to this fact is that all three have left office of their own volition after long terms of service to their neighbors.

Norman Holden was first elected to the board of aldermen of the City of Southport 16 years ago and has served two stints as mayor during a total of 14 years service to the city. He has guided the board of aldermen through a major and successful downtown revitalization effort and has presided over a board which revamped fiscal policy to the city's historic dependence on electric fund revenues.

During the Holden years, Southport has come into its own as a mecca for antique and curiosity hunters and a must-stop on the day tripper's agenda. Few have been more mayorly in the ceremonial functions of the job than has Holden.

May Moore accepted an appointment to the board of commissioners at Yaupon Beach 13 years ago and has spent the last ten years as mayor, an appointee of fellow board members under that town's charter.

Moore has been a steadfast defender of the municipal purse during her tenure. The budgetary and financial planning Yaupon Beach has done during this time has placed it in outstanding fiscal condition, able to provide services on par with towns much larger in size. Moore has also been a strong voice in regional, particularly coastal, issues which have effect far beyond town limits.

Few could have provided the quality leadership Moore did as week-after-week, month-after-month, Yaupon Beach was tested by the challenges accompanying development of the first public wastewater management system on Oak Island. When engineers and contractors failed and when state regulators knew not where to turn, mayor Moore established direction and guided the town past what could have been an economic disaster.

The commitment to public and environmental health represented by this farsighted wastewater management program will be among Moore's legacies to her hometown.

Caswell Beach is an exceedingly attractive town with a broad tax base and variety of housing options today for the vision of Jack Cook, the town's second mayor. Cook has been the town's highest elected official for 16 of the 20 years it has been incorporated.

Cook teamed with several other talented and visionary public officials in the early 1980s to create a town virtually from scratch. Early on, Cook saw the potential to offer a way of life that offers the best of many worlds to its residents and visitors. Cook's leadership at Caswell Beach proved that if municipal governments insist on quality development, big dividends will result.

During his years in office, Cook and his contemporaries set the standards by which a young town would grow. Zoning and subdivision ordinances were tailored to their vision. Land use plans were drawn and updated to further speak to a unique quality of life. Town Hall was built and local government grew from inconsequential to essential in the lives of Caswell Beach residents and visitors.

In the opening paragraph of this offering great pains were taken to say the "official" services of these three public servants would be lost next week. While the official careers end, it is hard to imagine their service to the public will -- in one capacity or another.

The Southport-Oak Island area owes mayors Norman Holden, May Moore and Jack Cook a huge debt of gratitude.

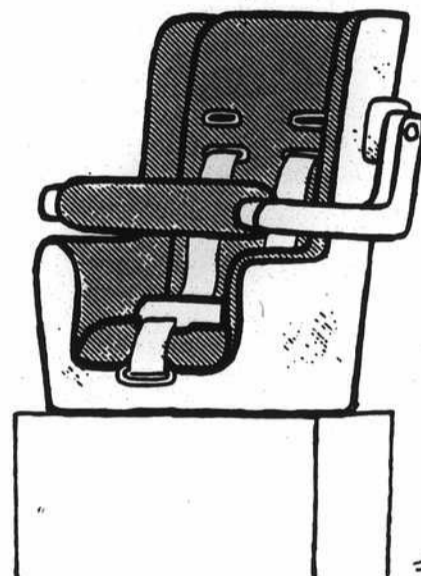
How fortunate we are

Thanks to the good members of the Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce, residents of our community, and visitors to it, were treated to yet another fine Christmas parade on Oak Island last weekend.

The Christmas-by-the-Sea celebration launched several years ago by the chamber has done much to enhance life here in Southport-Oak Island at a special time of year.

The efforts of our commercial community in endeavors like the N. C. Fourth of July Festival, the U. S. Open King Mackerel Tournament and Christmas-by-the-Sea serve to remind us all of how fortunate we are to be able to "Shop At Home" with neighbors willing to return so much to us.

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Not exactly news

Remember when Leland was the biggest star on Brunswick County's map when it got the first McDonald's this side of the river? And how jealous we were when Shallotte got theirs, and how proud we were when Fred Walker put up golden arches on Long Beach Road? Well, time marches on. Now there is one at Grissetown, an unincorporated crossroads between Shallotte and the South Carolina line. It's more evidence how that area of Brunswick County is developing along the U. S. 17 corridor, and proof that if you serve a quarter-pounder the tourists will come... We attended the Christmas show at Alabama Theater last week and can now give an even stronger endorsement to the Carolina Opry extravaganza. One visitor had a unique observation: "We like the Carolina Opry better," he said, "because it features talented country singers who present a classy Christmas program. At Alabama, it was a group of talented singers singing Christmas songs." We plan to check out other Myrtle Beach venues this holiday season; it's amazing how stage entertainment has flourished there the past couple years.

We wish he played closer to home so we could see him more often. Carl Parker of Bolivia, a graduate of South Brunswick High, now is a senior forward at William and Mary and is regarded highly enough to be named co-captain. The In-

dians lost 71-66 the other night to 20th-ranked Virginia Tech but it wasn't for lack of effort by Carl, who scored 22 points on ten-of-14 shooting. Parker and W&M play former high school teammate Preston McGriff and UNC-Wilmington twice in the Colonial Athletic Association regular season, at Trask Coliseum on Saturday, January 20, and at Williamsburg in February... We took our early-season Christmas light tour Sunday night and found the most impressive decoration thus far to be on Mill Creek Road, on the left about a mile from N. C. 87. It may be the most lights we've seen anyone use without sacrificing good taste.

There's plenty more where Christmas came from on Saturday as the chamber-sponsored Christmas-by-the-Sea celebration centers on Southport. The evening activities include a tree-lighting ceremony at 5 p.m., a home tour from 5 until 9 p.m., a Sea Notes sing-along on the steps of Franklin Square Art Gallery at 7 p.m. and the holiday flotilla at 7:30 p.m.... What we sorely miss, however, is Holiday House, which for decades truly marked the beginning of Christmas in this city. The Community Building hosted not only wonderful entertainment, but the sharing of Christmas cheer and decorating ideas for the enjoyment of us all...

We enjoyed the Christmas-by-the-Sea parade again on Saturday. It is a parade of neighbors, as the Fourth of July parade never quite seems to be, and we had as good a time walking down the ranks and visiting before the affair as we did watching the participants rolling -- or marching -- by... The sense of intimacy about the Christmas parade is no doubt aided by the relatively sparse crowds -- sparse by comparison with Southport's Fourth of July gathering -- and yet we know that what we are seeing at Christmas-by-the-Sea is a crowd diluted more by the length of the march than by interest. It is a very popular event, and properly so.

Sunday afternoon was a throw-back to summer, and we not only saw a couple of skateboarders working in downtown Southport with their shirts off, but visitors turned up at Brunswick Town for the seasonal exhibition and vespers service in short sleeves and -- in some cases -- shorts... The Brunswick Town observance remains among our favorites for the Christmas season, even though the theme is not as heavily infused with Christmas as many others at this time. There is something fundamentally satisfying about attending a religious service in a setting like the ruins of St. Philip's Church, and if you haven't made one of these yet, try hard for next year.

Public opinion

'The Point'

To the Editor:
I think the recent Long Beach Town Council decision to allow vehicular access to the west end ("The Point") of Oak Island is both thoughtless and extremely careless. It indicates a complete disregard for our natural environment and a willingness to placate the desires of a few at the expense of the entire community.

"The Point" offers residents and tourists alike the opportunity to stroll, fish, bird-watch, run the dog, shell and just "be" in a relatively peaceful, unspoiled, natural setting. I live a block from the beach but I still drive down to "The Point" several times a week to enjoy the wide-open feeling it affords. After I park my car, I get out and actually walk across to the shore. I've never considered it an inconvenience that I cannot drive my car right down to the beach.

I imagine allowing vehicles on "The Point" might have some long-range effects on erosion, vegetation

and shorebird activity. Just as important, though, it would certainly ruin the natural splendor and spoil the aesthetic pleasure of the place.

If more convenient accessibility is the town council's priority, then pave the whole damn thing and be done with it. But if they are at all concerned with maintaining the delicate balance and beauty of our coastal environment, if council members are truly honorable stewards of this precious island, they must know when to leave well enough alone and realize how foolish this decision is and rescind it.

Katie DuMont
Long Beach

'Trickle down'

To the Editor:
For many years I have tried without success to understand "trickle down" economics. After reviewing recent actions by our elected officials, I think I'm about to get a handle on it.

Elected politicians who decide it is their obligation to fulfill another politician's campaign promises with public funds will "trickle down" to you and me in the form of increased taxes.

When an elected board sues another elected board for huge sums of money and wins, once again public funds were used to pay the award plus staggering legal fees

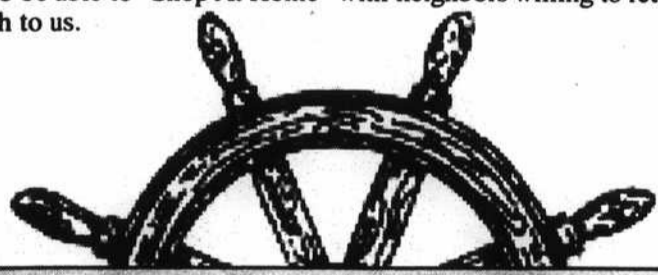
with the ultimate cost "trickling down" to you and me in the form of increased taxes and loss of services.

This truly is the land of the free -- and easy -- when employees can sue their employer over work assignments. True, some could benefit, but once again the ultimate cost will "trickle down" to you and me in the form of increased taxes, loss of services and some kitchen equipment.

Now I feel I understand "trickle down" economics as practiced in Brunswick County. What a relief.

Who can you and I sue?
Don Smith
Long Beach

To The Editor:
The State Port Pilot invites its readers to share their views on subjects of public interest. Comments should be addressed to The Editor and mailed to The State Port Pilot, P.O. Box 10548, Southport, N.C. 28461. Letters should be limited to 250 words, longer letters will be edited for space, or will be returned to the writer if editing would significantly alter the content. Please include the writer's address and/or telephone number so he or she can be contacted by the Editor if necessary. Addresses and telephone numbers will not be printed.



USPS 520-280

Published Every Wednesday by The State Port Pilot Inc.

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James M. Harper Jr. - Publisher 1935-1994

Subscription rates (including postage): \$10.87 a year in Brunswick County \$16.47 elsewhere in North Carolina • \$19.00 outside North Carolina
105 South Howe Street, Southport, NC 28461-3817
Second class postage paid at Southport & additional mailing offices.
Postmaster: Send address changes to:
P.O. Box 10548, Southport, NC 28461-0548
Phone 457-4568 • Fax 457-9427

NCPA General Excellence award winner six co